

Message Text

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PAGE 01 DJIBOU 00953 010915Z

ACTION AF-10

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FM AMEMBASSY DJIBOUTI

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1045

INFO AMEMBASSY ADDIS ABABA

AMEMBASSY CAIRO

AMEMBASSY JIDDA

AMEMBASSY KHARTOUM

AMEMBASSY MOGADISCIO

AMEMBASSY NAIROBI

AMEMBASSY PARIS

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

COMIDEASTFO

C O N F I D E N T I A L DJIBOUTI 953

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PDEV, PINS, DJ

SUBJ: DJIBOUTI INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS 1978

SUMMARY-PRESIDENT HASSAN GOULED CALLED FOR NATIONAL UNITY
IN VARIOUS ADDRESSES GIVEN AT A NUMBER OF EVENTS PLANNED FOR
THE CELEBRATION OF DJIBOUTI'S FIRST YEAR OF INDEPENDENCE.

THE EVENTS INCLUDED AN IMPRESSIVE MILITARY PARADE, A MID-DAY
RECEPTION IN THE PALACE GARDEN AND A LENGTHY PERFORMANCE OF
FOLKLORIC DANCES AND GAMES AT THE STADIUM IN THE LATE AFTERNOON.
PRIME MINISTER ABDALLAH KAMIL WAS AT THE PRESIDENT'S SIDE
THROUGHOUT THE DAY, VIRTUALLY THE SOLE PROMINENT AFAR TO MAKE
ANY PUBLIC DISPLAY OF SUPPORT TO THE NATIONAL DAY.

1. INDEPENDENCE DAY, JUNE 27, IN DJIBOUTI PROVIDED PRESIDENT
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PAGE 02 DJIBOU 00953 010915Z

HASSAN GOULED WITH AN OPPORTUNITY, LONG SINCE NEGLECTED, TO
PROJECT THE IMAGE OF AN ENERGETIC AND ELOQUENT LEADER,
CAREFUL OF THE INTERESTS OF ALL THE CITIZENRY OF HIS COUNTRY.
DESPITE RECENT ILL HEALTH, THE PRESIDENT ROSE TO THE
OCCASION, AND IN FACT PUT ON THE MOST IMPRESSING DISPLAY OF
POLITICAL STATE THAT THIS EMBASSY HAS OBSERVED FROM HIM SINCE ITS

OPENING 15 MONTHS AGO.

2. THE PRESIDENT'S BRIEF ADDRESS TO THE THRONG ATTENDING THE PALACE RECEPTION, IN FRENCH, DEALT PRIMARILY WITH THE COUNTRY'S SEARCH FOR FRIENDS AND ITS DESIRE FOR NEUTRALITY. AT THE CONCLUSION OF "POPULAR REJOICING", AS IT WAS TERMED, AT THE STADIUM, THE PRESIDENT DELIVERED A FEW LINES OF WELCOME IN THE AFAR LANGUAGE AND IN FRENCH AND THEN DELIVERED A VIGOROUS AND LENGTHY SPEECH IN SOMALI. THE ADDRESS MUST HAVE RECALLED TO EVERYONE THE PRESIDENT'S EARLIER DAYS AS A GRASS-ROOTS POLITICIAN. IT WAS WELL RECEIVED, APPARENTLY EVEN BY AFARS PRESENT, AND HE WAS REPEATEDLY APPLAUDED. A TRANSLATION OF THE SPEECH REVEALS THAT IT CONCERNED RECOLLECTIONS OF HIS ROLE AS AN OPPOSITION POLITICIAN AND SOME OF THE HIGHLIGHTS OF THE INDEPENDENCE STRUGGLE.

3. PRIME MINISTER ABDALLAH KAMIL ATTENDED ALL THE EVENTS AT THE RIGHT HAND OF THE PRESIDENT, PUTTING AT EASE THOSE WHO FEARED THAT HE MIGHT RESIGN ON THE EVE OF THE INDEPENDENCE CELEBRATIONS. KAMIL DID NOT APPEAR NOTABLY ENTHUSIASTIC. A DJIBOUTI JOURNALIST WHO ATTENDED INDEPENDENCE FETES AT TADJOURA AND OBOCK, AFAR TOWNS ON THE NORTH COAST OF THE GULF OF TADJOURA, REPORTED TO THE CHARGE THAT THE POPULATIONS OF THOSE TWO TOWNS ALMOST ENTIRELY BOYCOTTED THE EVENTS. HE NOTED TO THE CHARGE THAT LOCAL PEOPLE REPORTEDLY WERE WARNED BY A DELEGATION OF LOCAL AFAR DEPUTIES NOT TO SHOW UP FOR LOCAL FESTIVITIES.

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PAGE 03 DJIBOU 00953 010915Z

4. COMMENT-IT IS UNFORTUNATE THAT TRIBAL PROBLEMS CAUSED A BLEMISH ON THE PRESIDENT'S DAY. FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR EXPERIENCE, HE LOOKED AND SOUNDED LIKE A NATIONAL LEADER.

CLARKE

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